

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6163  
DOUGLAS ROBERTS/CAIRO

SEPTEMBER 27, 1978

EGYPT: MOOD

ANNCR:

DOUGLAS ROBERTS IN CAIRO HAS BEEN ASSESSING THE MOOD IN EGYPT IN THE WAKE OF THE CAMP DAVID PEACE AGREEMENTS AND FOUND IT TO BE SPIRITED AND AT TIMES DEFIANT TEN DAYS AFTER THE ACCORDS WERE SIGNED.

VOICE:

THERE ARE SOME EGYPTIANS WHO FEEL PANGS ABOUT THE AGREEMENTS AND A HANDFUL WHO REJECT THEM OUTRIGHT. BUT BOTH THESE GROUPS ARE IN A CLEAR MINORITY. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CAIRENES TURNED OUT TO WELCOME PRESIDENT SADAT WHEN HE RETURNED HERE LAST WEEKEND. THE RECEPTION WAS WILD, REMINISCENT OF THE EGYPTIAN LEADER'S RETURN FROM JERUSALEM TEN MONTHS AGO. IT MUST HAVE BEEN A NIGHTMARE FOR HIS BODY GUARDS AS THE PRESIDENT RODE THROUGH THE STREETS STANDING IN AN OPEN LIMOUSINE. HE LOOKED TIRED BUT SATISFIED AND AT TIMES TRIUMPHANT.

SINCE THEN MISTER SADAT APPEARS CALM AND DETERMINED. HE ANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM A TELEVISION REPORTER MONDAY IN AN UNUSUALLY SOFT TONE SPEAKING OF THE NEED FOR PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD AFTER THREE DECADES OF HATRED AND WAR.

A GREAT MANY EGYPTIANS SEEM MORE THAN WILLING TO HEED THAT CALL. "ABSOLUTELY," DECLARES MORSI AL GABRI, A PROSPEROUS MERCHANT, "THERE SHOULD BE NO MORE HATRED BETWEEN US." HE IS A JOVIAL MAN, CLEAN-SHAVEN WITH GRAYING HAIR AND AN EASY SMILE. HE FREQUENTLY WAVED HIS HANDS FOR EMPHASIS AS HE SPOKE TO A VISITOR IN THE SMALL OFFICE AT THE BACK OF HIS HANDICRAFT SHOP.

PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE HERE, HE SAYS, ARE SATISFIED WITH THE CAMP DAVID AGREEMENTS. HE DESCRIBES THEM AS THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO EGYPT THIS CENTURY.

MISTER AL GABRI SAYS HE WILL BE THE FIRST IN LINE FOR A VISIT TO ISRAEL ONCE A PEACE TREATY IS SIGNED. AND HE PROUDLY DISPLAYS A PAGE IN HIS AUTOGRAPH BOOK SIGNED BY ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER EZER WEIZMAN DURING LAST WINTER'S NEGOTIATIONS HERE.

"WITH GREAT HOPES THAT PEACE WILL SOON BE WITH US," WROTE MISTER WEIZMAN IN ENGLISH, ARABIC AND HEBREW.

FEATURE REPORTS ON THE BENEFITS OF PEACE ESPECIALLY ITS ECONOMIC BENEFITS, HAVE BEGUN TO APPEAR IN CAIRO NEWSPAPERS. BUT MISTER AL GABRI WARNS AGAINST UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS. THERE IS A FEELING AMONG SOME PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE POOR, HE SAYS, THAT PEACE WILL BRING INSTANT PROSPERITY. MISTER AL GABRI BELIEVES THAT PEACE TREATY WILL INSPIRE CONFIDENCE AMONG INVESTORS AND GENERATE MOVEMENT IN THE ECONOMY. BUT HE WANTS THE GOVERNMENT TO MOUNT AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN TO SHOW EGYPTIANS THAT HARD WORK WILL BE NEEDED TO DEVELOP THIS COUNTRY ONCE PEACE IS ESTABLISHED.

EGYPTIAN ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY DEFIANCE AND ANGER WITH SOME OF CAIRO'S ERSTWHILE ALLIES IN THE ARAB WORLD -- ESPECIALLY SYRIA, LIBYA AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. "WE ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE SUFFERED," DECLARES MISTER AL GABRI. "IF THE OTHERS WANT TO FIGHT," HE CONTINUED, "LET THEM. BUT THEY WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO STOP THE PEACE PROCESS."

A FORMER EGYPTIAN DIPLOMAT BELIEVES THAT IF OTHER ARAB LEADERS HAD COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF MISTER SADAT FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL, THE PROSPECTS FOR AN OVERALL ACCORD INVOLVING SYRIA, JORDAN AND THE PALESTINIANS WOULD NOW BE MUCH HIGHER. AND A LEADING COLUMNIST CAUTIONS EGYPT AGAINST ANGER WITH OTHER ARAB STATES, ADVISING THE TACTICS OF PERSUASION INSTEAD. "SOONER OR

LATER," HE SAYS, "THEY WILL REALIZE THAT IT IS IN THEIR OWN BEST INTERESTS TO JOIN IN THE PEACE PROCESS."

FOR NOW, EGYPTIANS SEEM WILLING TO LET THE OTHER ARABS GO THEIR OWN WAY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PREPARING FOR A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL. WITH THIS IN MIND AN EGYPTIAN DOCTOR FROM THE VILLAGE OF QUM AL HAMMADA TOOK THE UNUSUAL STEP OF ADDRESSING A LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER BEGIN. DOCTOR KAMAL ABDERRAHMAN AL HOFI WROTE THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL SHOULD NOW COOPERATE FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH COUNTRIES. HE SUGGESTS A JOINT VENTURE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HOSPITAL IN HIS VILLAGE. HE INVITES THE ISRAELI LEADER TO VISIT HIM THERE AND EVEN OFFERS MISTER BEGIN A HALF AN ACRE (ABOUT ONE-QUARTER HECTARE) OF LAND. "YEARS OF WAR HAVE GIVEN US MANY COMPLEXES," WRITES DOCTOR AL HOFI, "BUT NOW WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER IN THE SHADOW OF PEACE AND LOVE."

GH/RCS